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# EXTERNAL RESEARCH FOR INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS AT THE NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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# EXTERNAL RESEARCH FOR INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS AT THE NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

Until a few years ago, foreign intelligence analysts were perhaps the most obscure participants in the foreign policy process. They were quiet contributors to decision making in national security and international affairs, and remained largely anonymous even within the government circles they served. They worked under a partial cloak of secrecy and in a bureaucratic culture that discouraged freewheeling contacts or exchanges with outside specialists. CIA analysts rarely spoke on the record about their work, were inconspicuous members of academic and professional associations, and seldom saw the unclassified results of their research and analysis shared outside of the national security establishment. That restricted environment provided them the dubious luxury of being able to work with almost no outside pressures or cirticism and for a relatively small and high level group of satisfied consumers.

During the last five years or so, most of that has changed dramatically as the average CIA analyst has emerged from his previous anonymity and silence. Many specialists have

earned reputations both in and out of government as leading experts in their fields and have published numerous books and articles in scholarly journals. Last year, approximately 300 analysts attended conferences, conventions, and symposia in their areas of interest. These gatherings included national and regional conferences of the major associations in about a dozen disciplines, conferences of the principal area and international studies associations, and others devoted to the affairs of a single country or to specialized topics. More than 30 analysts delivered papers as panelists at these meetings and in most cases presented the results of their Agency research. In all instances, of course, they openly and freely identified their Agency affiliation. CIA analysts must still be conscientious in protecting the sensitive sources and methods used in acquiring some of the information they use, and avoid becoming embroiled in the policy aspects of current foreign affairs. With the exception of these restraints, CIA analysts are encouraged to participate and function much as their academic counterparts.

More and more of the CIA analysts' work also has come out of the locked closet. In 1972 the Agency joined in the Document Expediting Project (DOCEX) at the Library of Congress as a means of disseminating unclassified studies to subscribers outside of government. The number and analytic scope of

intelligence products released in this manner has grown steadily since then, from only 29 the first year, to 150 in 1977. Last year, some of the Agency's most important analytic works were released through DOCEX. Included were estimates of Soviet and Chinese energy capabilities and the international energy outlook into the next decade, a dollar cost comparison of Soviet and US defense activities, analyses of political elites, and international terrorism, as well as specialized studies concerned with the Soviet tin industry, nuclear energy, the world steel market and other topics. A large number of basic research reports on subjects such as major oil and gas fields, Communist aid to less-developed countries, economic statistics and indices, and biographic compilations also were released last year. DOCEX subscribers include about 150 libraries--most of them at colleges and universities around the country--and a number of commercial and business enterprises. The public derives more from its tax dollars spent for foreign intelligence as a result of these efforts, and CIA has benefited from useful critiques from outside experts.

As the number of consumers of intelligence products has increased during the last few years, so has the corps of outside experts who review and comment on analysts' work. Panels of academic and other specialists have been constituted by CIA to provide regular reviews of completed work and to

recommend new methodologies, lines of inquiry, and additional dimensions to our research programs. One of them, the Military-Economic Advisory Panel, was established several years ago to examine the capabilities and record of intelligence analyses of the productive capacity and potential of the Soviet economy to produce for the military sector. The panel consists of eight members, including four prominent economists from academia, US defense industry analysts, and former national security policy makers. The panel has played an important role in improving military economic estimates and in clarifying and reducing intense controversy over issues related to Soviet defense spending.

Other leading scholars have agreed to serve as Agency consultants on specific research efforts, and a vigorous new effort currently is underway to add a number of additional experts to our panels of consultants. Once that process is completed, the Agency's consultants will represent nearly every academic discipline with a foreign affairs or national security focus and will include experts in the national and regional affairs of every corner of the globe. A small scholar-in-residence program provides another mechanism by which academic experts may contribute to foreign intelligence research programs as contract employees. The popular Summer Intern program provides similar opportunities to graduate students. It is hoped that the quality and scope of intelligence analysis will continue to improve as a result of this

broader participation by outside scholars in the intelligence process.

The National Foreign Assessment Center

These and similar steps that have been taken during the last five years or so have helped to make CIA's research and analysis components more open and responsive to a larger public and private constituency. Recent internal Agency reorganizations have also been aimed in part at this objective as well as at improving the quality of analysis. One major step was the creation a few months ago of the National Foreign Assessment Center. It consolidated all of the CIA components that do substantive research and estimates under a single management. National Foreign Assessment Center specialists examine and assess the political, economic, military, scientific, and technological affairs of foreign countries. They also conduct research in geographic, cartographic, environmental, biographic and other areas of interest to US foreign policy decision makers. The Director of the Foreign Assessment Center also serves as the Deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence for National Intelligence.

The National Foreign Assessment Center is structured like some of the larger private research institutes. Analysis is done both in strictly disciplinary environments and in multidisciplinary research centers. This allows specialists

considerable freedom to move back and forth in an organizational matrix. The traditional research offices are built around a single discipline or set of related ones and produce the bulk of intelligence estimates and analyses. It was the National Foreign Assessment Center's Office of Economic Research, for example, that conducted the research in Chinese, Soviet, and international energy that has been mentioned. Its Office of Scientific Intelligence produced the study cited above on nuclear energy. These and other research programs that are primarily intradisciplinary continue to consume the majority of our analytic resources. This is true primarily because our research responds in the first instance to the needs of senior Washington policy-makers, most of whom continue to want specialized analysis.

A growing percentage of the National Foreign Assessment Center's research is conducted, nevertheless, in the several multidisciplinary research centers that have been created during the last few years. The Military Economic Analysis Center is a cross-disciplinary research component staffed by economists, weapons technologists and other military analysts, and specialists in other fields. It is devoted primarily to formulating estimates of Soviet resource allocations for defense. The estimates are made in two forms: in rubles in order to assess the resource considerations affecting Soviet

defense planning, and in dollars in order to permit a meaningful comparison with US defense efforts. This center is supported by the advisory panel, already described, which has proven to be an effective forum for maintaining a creative dialogue between experts in the intelligence and academic communities. Additional comments from private experts have been submitted to specialists in the Military Economic Analysis Center from scholars who have read copies of its unclassified reports issued through DOCEX.

The Environment and Resource Analysis Center is a new and unusual multidisciplinary component in the National Foreign Assessment Center. It has responsibility for investigating several important and complex global issues, including population and food problems in several priority less developed countries, water resource problems, and agricultural production. Interdisciplinary teams of geographers, economists, political scientists, demographers, hydrologists, ecologists, agronomists and others work together on common projects. The center is also developing more structured research methods, including computer modeling, to address particularly complicated problems and to project trends in population, water, and food availability five to twenty-five years ahead. Because so much of this center's work is in areas that are relatively new for intelligence analysts, external analytical support is an important part

of its research program. Contracts with several universities and think tanks, and an assortment of consulting relationships provide it with invaluable outside contributions. The complexity of the linkages among the global issues the Environment and Resource Analysis Center assesses makes cooperation between the academic and intelligence communities all the more necessary.

The Strategic Evaluation Center, another of the consolidated centers in the National Foreign Assessment Center, provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessments of Soviet military developments responsive to the interests and concerns of senior national security policy makers. Building on the specialized studies of National Foreign Assessment Center economic, political, technical, weapons, and military forces analysts, the Strategic Evaluation Center's studies are intended to address all aspects of military power and to investigate in particular the larger questions of strategic balance. Its Soviet specialists assess the personality and institutional aspects of military policy, doctrine, and decision making; its mathematical and operations research specialists are concerned with measures of military force effectiveness; and other center analysts study the Soviet military command and control communications structures for the diverse information that can be adduced on military effectiveness, intentions, and self evaluations. Outside

experts in these specialties do a sizeable amount of contract research each year. Most contracts are with private research centers rather than universities or individual academics, largely because of the special requirements of most of the work. Unlike the other consolidated research centers that have relatively large audiences for much of their output, the Strategic Evaluations Center produces primarily for a small community of senior US officials.

Another new cross-disciplinary research center is the only one created thus far in the National Foreign Assessment Center that is concerned with a geographic or political unit rather than a set of issues. The Cuba Analytic Center, an experimental research group in the Office of Regional and Political Analysis, brings together a group of Cuban and Latin American experts with an assortment of specialties. Their backgrounds and skills are in history, political science, economics, military and defense analysis, and biographic analysis. Among them they have accumulated approximately 50 years of professional intelligence experience in Cuban affairs. The Cuba center was established in order to concentrate resources and capabilities under a single management and to encourage more consolidated and integrated research. The center will consult regularly with a group of Cuba specialists in academia, and plans to issue relevant unclassified results

of its work through the DOCEX mechanism to generate additional comments from interested private scholars.

These and other cross-disciplinary research centers have helped to fill what were once major gaps in intelligence research programs and management. In addition to them, moreover, there are twelve National Intelligence Officers who have mandates independent of the offices and centers to promote and manage integrated research in their areas of interest. Among their major responsibilities is the production of national intelligence estimates and other top-level, coordinated national intelligence. Known as NIOs, these officers are senior experts with area and functional portfolios. China, the USSR, and the other regions, and global issues of major interest such as strategic military affairs, political-economic affairs, and nuclear proliferation are covered by NIOs. Several of these officials have recently joined the National Foreign Assessment Center from tenured positions at universities and the top levels of private research institutes. Others from outside of government are also expected to join them and bring the latest perspectives and methodologies developed in their fields to bear in some of the most critical national intelligence production.

The National Intelligence Officers and the personnel of the consolidated research centers share an outlook that is relatively new and significant: they are oriented outwards

toward sources of external analytical support. They rely increasingly on consultants and contractors to supplement their research efforts, and enjoy cordial and fruitful relations with large numbers of private scholars. Since most of them either have recently transferred from academic or research jobs or have kept up their contacts with colleagues from graduate school, an extensive network of relationships exists. Thus, in addition to the formal contracts and consultantships, there are also innumberable informal exchanges of opinion and information between the academic and intelligence communities and much traveling back and forth. These relationships are mutually beneficial and are expanding rapidly to the apparent satisfaction of both groups.

These changes in the spirit and manner in which some intelligence analysis has been conducted over the past few years have not been the subject of particular public notice. Some of our critics have wondered, however, about the Agency's motives and suspect that the changes are merely a public relations ploy. In effect, they have asked whether CIA is taking a mask off--or putting one on. In fact, in making most of the changes described the Agency has been encouraged by investigative bodies in the legislative and executive branches, by shcolars and other interested private citizens, by CIA oversight organs, and to no small extent, by restless younger

intelligence officers. The changes have all the appearances of being permanent and of penetrating even further into the traditional bureaucratic culture. There is broad agreement that they are positive and necessary, and that they will help to restore the high degree of mutual respect and understanding that once characterized relations between the intelligence and other scholarly communities.

There are dangers in doing too much of this too fast, however. The passage for some intelligence analysts has been difficult, and this is understandable. Intelligence analysts prefer and perform best in the penumbra somewhere between the anonymity of the past and the notoriety that looms with the breaking of every new story about CIA. It is a difficult but essential equilibrium to maintain. Each time analysts or their work are in the news, whether there is a real controversy or not, knowledgeable consumers and critics alike worry that our judgments, and balance, and objectivity will be undermined in the glare of the lights. Increased participation in the public arena, including some of the steps already taken, may under certain circumstances, give the impression that the analytic process has been tainted. A leading or conspicuous public role by the National Foreign Assessment Center might not permit any other interpretation. Thus, it is essential that if intelligence analyses and estimates are to remain uncontaminated by political and partisan pressures, and if

they are to be concerned with foreign affairs issues more transcendent than those treated in the evening newscasts, they will have to be conducted in an environment that protects the privacy of the process.

Perhaps this is the point then at which something should be said about the nature of intelligence analysis, its purposes, its strengths, and its weaknesses. It can be stated that research and analysis in the National Foreign Assessment Center is done largely in three modes: basic, current, and premonitory. Much of the analysis simultaneously reflects all three dimensions of course. The Office of Economic Research's recent work in international energy is one example where basic, current, and future analyses were blended.

Basic research and analysis--utilizing biographic, geographic, economic, political, and other data--provides many of the essential foundations for the more analytic foreign area and international relations work done in CIA. As indicated earlier, a sizeable proportion of this basic work is shared with the private research community. In all instances, of course, our basic research endeavors are intended directly to support more comprehensive analytic programs that in turn respond to the requirements of the official foreign policy and national security community.

Analysis of current international developments and their near term implications are another significant form that National Foreign Assessment Center research takes. Policy making officials rely on intelligence analysts to collate and interpret the mass of current intelligence information available from overt and other sources. They can be expected for instance, to want current appraisals of the military balance in the Horn of Africa, about the latest nuances in Middle Eastern negotiations, and about the internal political dynamics of countries. Intelligence research in the current and basic modes is quite like the serious, scholarly research done by private scholars. By training, instinct, motivation, and circumstance, therefore, the intelligence analysts who do this work more closely resemble academic and other private scholars than any other group.

The resemblance is thinner, however, in the third major mode of intelligence analysis, because not nearly so much academic writing is aimed at the future. Increasingly, it is to a better understanding of this realm that the intelligence analyst must devote himself. This is also where he is most vulnerable to errors and oversights, and the nearly infinite possibilities of failing to predict the unexpected. Critics of the intelligence process, and of agencies such as the CIA, specifically delight in cataloguing events that analysts "failed to foresee." In most of these cases they

are attributing failures to perform functions that intelligence analysis is not intended to perform for the obvious reason that it cannot be performed. As we all know, unique events in the protean world of human experience are rarely precisely predictable. Intelligence analysts can hardly be expected to predict human events when often the actors themselves do not know in advance what they will do.

What can be done, and what intelligence analysts endeavor to do as their primary duty is to narrow the uncertainties in present and likely future situations. They try to assess trends and circumstances in such a way as to help prepare the consumers of intelligence estimates for a range of events that might occur. As the Schlesinger Report said in 1971:

> In a world of perfect information, there would be no uncertainties about the present and future intentions, capabilities, and activities of foreign powers. Information however, is bound to be imperfect for the most part. Consequently, the intelligence community can at best reduce this uncertainty and construct plausible hypotheses about these factors on the basis of what continues to be partial and often conflicting evidence.

The final report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence added, that "to expect more may be to court disappointment."[1] Good intelligence or accurate predictions cannot insure against bad policy in any event. Some intelligence analysts and officials have argued that alleged

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[1] Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Book I, page 268.

"intelligence failures" in recent years were actually "policy failures" by officials who rejected the findings of intelligence appraisals.

Conclusions

The Foreign Assessment Center is looking outward for new cooperative and contractual relationships with individual scholars and institutions. More and more of its analysts and research managers need external analytical support in order to carry out their research programs. This is true of intradisciplinary and specialized research offices as well as of the new consolidated centers and National Intelligence Officers. The need for additional external support has become more urgent as the requirements and interests of the policy level consumers of intelligence have multiplied and expanded into new areas in recent years. Consumers have focused more intently on global issues, political-economic relationships, commodity problems, and others. Meanwhile, the requirements for the specialized and basic intelligence products that have been standard fare for some time have also increased, and all of this has occurred during a period of shrinking resources in the intelligence community.

External contractors can help make a positive and sometimes unique contribution to the research programs of the National Foreign Assessment Center. They can undertake integral analytic assignments in order to help fulfill requests from

policy-level consumers. They can assist the National Foreign Assessment Center build capital against future demand, and help our research managers anticipate needs that are still over the horizon. They can critique and review intelligence products that are in process. They can review intelligence production programs and suggest new methodologies and topics that ought to be added because they are likely to become important or dropped because they have already been thoroughly researched externally. They can provide specialized talent and expertise in areas where we either do not require a full-time staff commitment or where we have been unable to fill a position in an arcane specialty. External contractors can help in both basic and applied research, and in adapting new methodologies. And as indicated earlier, they can be specialists in virtually any discipline or field that has a foreign affairs or national security dimension.

There is of course, an array of external factors that will restrain the growth of contractual relationships between the intelligence and academic communities. Some scholars refuse to work with classified information, and others in effect, are not permitted to do so by the rules of their institutions. Some, unfortunately, reject any contact with intelligence organizations because of pressures on campus or their own indignation with problems associated with CIA in

the past. Others are concerned that a CIA relationship would damage their credibility and access in foreign countries they are interested in. The National Foreign Assessment Center must deal with these problems just as regularly as the other elements of the intelligence community. Our positions are clearly established in Agency regulations, and may be stated on the record. No one in the private sector unknowingly or unwillingly works for the National Foreign Assessment Center. Although we prefer that individual scholars under contract or consulting with us make the relationship known on their campuses, we can not abridge their rights to privacy by insisting on this. Thus, when such relationships are discreet, it is almost always at the insistence of the scholar. For many years, it has been Agency policy to inform appropriate senior officials of academic institutions of contractual relationships with those institutions. It should be emphasized, in addition, that there are no instances where scholars providing research services to the Foreign Assessment Center have become involved in covert intelligence activities abroad.